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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the Community Transition Center (CTC) model, being tested in six districts in rural Wisconsin. The model is a way of conceptualizing and organizing the employment-related needs of mainstreamed mildly handicapped youths who are exiting secondary schools. The model emphasizes the role of secondary school transition programming, the need for the school to establish work experience programs, the development of an active network between the secondary school and post-secondary settings to assist students in their transition from school to community, and the establishment of a center that can be individually tailored to the needs of the community. The center helps teachers provide employment preparation skills; responds to the need for services beyond a school's capacity; and pools resources among schools, adult services providers, and employers. The CTC model consists of three major components. First, it is a school-based program with a curriculum that focuses on transitional programming. The program also is designed to address organizational issues within the school. The second component is the CTC service capacity, a way of organizing and conceptualizing the types of additional job training services. The third component is the transition steering committee, the primary mechanism for bridging between the various community resources, secondary schools, and the CTC. The primary benefit of the CTC model is that it provides a way to organize and evaluate transition programming among the various key players in the school and community. (TES)

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THE COMMUNITY TRANSITION CENTER (CTC) MODEL

Introduction

The Community Transition Center (CTC) is a way of conceptualizing and organizing the employment related needs of youth with mild handicaps exiting the secondary public schools. The Model is founded on a number of successful principles in the other projects (D'Alonzo and Owen, 1985) and on those identified in Project ADAPT (Thomas, Coker, and Czerlinsky, 1988) which increased the ability of secondary schools to provide transitioning programs for their mildly handicapped youth. The Model emphasizes the lead role of the secondary school system in initiating transition programming, the need for the school to establish work experience programs, and the establishment of an active network between the secondary school and post-secondary settings to assist students in their transition from school to the community.

The CTC Model is being tested in six different school districts in west-central Wisconsin. There are common transition competencies that need to be addressed for successful transitioning of students, but there are several different ways that school district can organize their program. This program has been targeted toward rural secondary-aged learning disabled and other mildly handicapped students who have been mainstreamed into the general education classes. The program is currently operational in six school districts in West Central Wisconsin. The 1987-88 total enrollment in Grades 9-12 ranges from 178 in Turtle Lake to 650 in New Richmond with the others falling in between: 276 in Elk Mound, 320 in Prescott, 369 in Unity, and 483 in Barron.

The model is organized around a "Center" that can be individually tailored to the needs of a community. Urban or large school districts often can establish such a Center to meet their needs. In rural areas, the community may be a defined geographical area that encompasses several school districts. This allows rural school districts to pool resources to implement the model. The Center may located within a school district, cooperative education service area organization, rehabilitation center, vocational technical school, community college, or any appropriate setting. Though it is recommended that a "Center" exist, it is not necessary if the components of the Community Transition Center can be organized into existing structures.

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The objectives of this Training Institute are to:

1) Enhance the ability of the teacher participants to provide employment preparation skills to their handicapped youth in the school and community,

2) Describe the needs of mildly handicapped youth for direct services and programs beyond the school's capacity, and

3) Provide practical techniques for accessing and pooling resources through interagency collaboration among secondary schools, post-secondary educational settings, adult human services providers, and employers.

The next sections describe the foundations of the CTC Model in which the Institute training involved the participants in discussions for developing potential organization schemes and implementing transition techniques.

Model Components

The CTC Model consists of three major components: School-Based Program, CTC Service Capacity, and Networking.

Component I: School-Based Program

One of the CTC 's primary goals is to assist schools to develop effective programs that provide employment preparation for their students. Much of this activity is related to the implementation of a three part Functional Transition Curriculum and the organization to support it. The curriculum consist of three phases that are implemented during the senior year:

Employment Readiness Assessment,

Job Seeking Skills, and

Structured Job Search

The curriculum focuses the teachers' activities on transitional programming in the secondary setting. Assessment procedures, instruments, manuals, and realistic objectives are available from this program. This component of the Model is designed to facilitate the development of those vocational preparation and employment activities that can and should be pursued within the secondary school setting. The curriculum encompasses concepts that are consistent with the requirements of the Job Training Partnership Act's (JTPA) focus on pre-employment (school based) skills and work maturity (employer based) skills. The model program utilizes the concepts of curriculum based functional assessment and offers differ levels of assessment based on the needs of the student and competency of school personnel. A necessary part of this component is a work experience program and active administrative support.

The second aspect of the school based component is the organizational structure to support and coordinate the transition program. School develop internal Local Transition Teams which consist of the key players in the school. In Wisconsin, these players are typically the special education teachers assigned to the different classification of handicaps such as Learning Disabilities (LD), Emotionally Disturbed (ED), and Educable Mental Retardation (EMR); the special education director, local vocational education coordinator (LVEC), and the guidance counselor. Others may be involved depending on the school's organization such as staff provided through relationship with JTPA monies. The foci of the Transition Team are 1) developing, maintaining, monitoring, and revising the schools transition programming and 2) participation in writing and implementing Individual Transition Plans (ITP) for their students. The ITP is important both for the student and the school in order to maintain a focus on the successful entry into the post-secondary goal (employment, vocational training, or education) and having adequate support for the goal. Part of the school's transition programming must include an active involvement of the parents. Finally, the Transition Team needs to address issues within the school regarding:

1) Scheduling a credit class for employment readiness/career training,

2) Organizing the Special Education Staff so that both classroom and community-based transition activities are conducted,

3) Providing adequate release time for teachers to conduct the transition programs including time for at least one teacher to work with the employer and community,

4) Developing work experience, Cooperative Education, and other programs which allow students to be in the community during part of the school day or week,

5) Working out difficult problems in transportation, liability, and parental support,

6) Developing a working relationship with adult service providers in the community, and

7) Maintaining the program when difficulties and barriers occur.

Component 2: CTC Service Capacity

Though secondary schools must be responsible for initiating a transition program, there are limitations to the schools' capacity. The CTC Model offers a way of organizing and conceptualizing the types of additional services that may need to be provided. This component consists of several activities depending on the needs of the individual student, school, and adult service agencies. During the establishment phase of the CTC, the project staff provides direct technical assistance and matching community-based resources with student needs in the following areas:

Comprehensive Vocational Assessments. Vocational exploration and assessment are provided for development of the individual education plan and individual transition plan, as appropriate, using a combination of psychometrics, work samples, and community based situational assessments selected secondary sites and within the community.

Employment Training Skills. Students are trained in social adaptive skills, job keeping/job seeking skills either in the schools and community.

Job Tryouts. Temporary placements in industry are used for allowing the student to gain meaningful experiences and build their resumes, and sometimes lead to full or part-time employment.

On-the-Job Training. These opportunities are arranged through the participating employers in the CTC network.

Thirteenth Year Education for Employment Programs. A combination of employment preparation and educational program are developed on an individual basis for high school graduates with handicaps and are targeted toward providing educational, vocational, and employment preparation training courses to achieve competitive employment. These courses may be given at the University or Vocational School in a combination of credit, non-credit, and continuing education credit courses.

Structured Job Search. The CTC provides direct placement services utilizing a modified job club approach for students leaving secondary or post-secondary schools.

Accessing Post-Secondary Education. The CTC assists students in admissions planning and guidance into vocational education, building trade apprenticeships, and four-year universities in the area.

Counseling. Individual counseling is provided as an important adjunct to the vocational decision-making process and for personal well being.

In addition to working with the schools to provide appropriate programming during the school year, the CTC staff work with the schools and others in the following areas:

Coaching. Educational or job coaching following placement, or in conjunction with placement, will be provided to students as necessary.

Follow-up. Following-up and monitoring of students will be done to determine the need for further services and the effectiveness of programs.

Community Information Resource. The CTC provides information on employment, education, and available services in the area.

Career Development and Re-training. The CTC will be available on a continuous basis to assist those who have needs for career mobility or require training or support services to maintain or regain employment.

Technical Support. Consultation will be provided by the CTC staff to various educational settings and employment settings on services which assist mainstreaming or maintaining the student in post-secondary settings.

These primary elements require the establishment of linkages with other community based programs to obtain needed support services for youth in the secondary setting or at the CTC, work with parents/family, and referral of students to other community based programs.

Component III: The Transition Steering Committee (TSC)

The CTC Model is currently based on working with several schools in a geographical area. A Transition Steering Committee (TSC) was developed as the primary mechanism for bridging between the various community resources, the secondary schools, and the CTC. The TSC serves several functional and advisory roles. Functionally, the TSC assist a variety of students by providing direct services, employment, or education. Informal and formal (cooperative agreements) linkages among employers, educators, and service providers need to be established in to provide access to finite resources in the community or geographical area. In their advisory role, the initial focus of the TSC has been on the CTC and how it best serves the student interests. The advisory role, however, extends beyond the CTC. Employers, parents/family, educators, and others will become active in determining how the various resources should and could be used for the successful transition of handicapped youth in their community.

The Transition Steering Committee includes secondary schools, community based service providers, funding sources for services, other educational and training sources, unions and employers. This network assists in the following areas:

Advisory. The TSC advises the CTC on its organization, programs, and evaluation of impact.

Functional. The TSC provides:
- referrals to the CTC
- funding for various programs within CTC
- funding for services outside the CTC
- transitional support services within their setting
- training, OJT, and education
- employment

The Transition Steering Committee elects its own Chair from the following potential membership representing:

A. Vocational Technical School
B. CESA/Secondary School
C. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
D. Vocational Rehabilitation Facilities
E. JTPA/PIC Council
F. Employers/Chamber of Commerce
G. Building trades apprenticeship
H. Unions
I. Parent/family or advocates
J. Consumers
H. University

Model Benefits

The model has several benefits. The primary one is that it provides a way to organize and evaluate transition programming among the various key players in the school (special education, vocational education, regular education, pupil services/guidance, and administration), adult service providers, and community resources. Secondly, transitioning needs of students are addressed regardless of requirements for eligibility or certification for services by agencies external to the school. It provides a resource place for students during the critical transition junction - just after leaving school and while adjusting to post-secondary settings. It requires key players in the school and community to become familiar with the needs of the students and operating characteristics of the various players' organization. It is a starting point around which a comprehensive career education and transition programs can be built.

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